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ABSTRACT

This presentation takes an historical approach to homosexuality and homophobia in public schools. The methodology of "history from below" is applied. Methodological considerations are discussed, and experiences of gay and lesbian teachers and students are explored. The psychological, moral and political meanings various groups attach to homosexuality are reviewed in the context of history, paying attention to political issues and the pathologization of homosexuality. The legacy of the McCarthy era "witch hunts" is discussed. Despite the American Psychiatric Association's removal of homosexuality from the "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders" in 1973, a number of educators and administrators have continued to view it as a form of mental illness. Since th. 1970s, the emerging gay and lesbian rights movement coupled with the rise of the religious right have served to polarize the politics of American public education. Suicide is a major problem among young homosexuals. The fight against California's "Proposition 6," which would have barred gays and lesbians from working in public schools, is reviewed. The coming of AIDS to the United States heightened public awareness of homosexuality and presented an opportunity for education. The political and social climate of the 1990s has intensified the paradoxes. Appendix A shows results of a Dissertation Abstracts search and ERIC search. (Contains 58 references.) (EMK)

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No Trespassing: US Public Schools and the Border of Institutional Homophobia

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

No Trespassing: US Public Schools and the Border of Institutional Homophobia

> The public school should never infer or declare that the homosexual lifestyle is a norm for society. To make the public schools the next battleground for their agenda may very well be a fatal blow to this great American institution. It is villainous to use taxpayer dollars to promote a massive change in the moral culture of this society that has been held together for millenniums by the man/woman relationship. – Rev. Louis Sheldon, The Traditional Values Coalition, Spring 1997.

Contemporary education literature seems rife with discussions of crossing borders; of teachers, administrators and researchers examining and transgressing those social and political lines of demarcation that have historically disenfranchised specific groups such as African Americans, Hispanics, women, the working class and poor, etc. With the growing acceptance of critical pedagogy by academics, public educators have been encouraged to view themselves as "cultural workers," a notion that expands their sense of social positionality and broadens their professional mission. Subsequently, teachers, administrators, researchers and policymakers should "cross borders" (Giroux, 1992), "teach to transgress" (hooks, 1994), and engage in other pedagogic acts of liberation in hopes of bettering outcomes for all students. Public education, while still considered a hegemonic institution, might be on occasion, a liberating tonic for historically marginalized groups (Lugg, 1996a)

Yet, for all of the heady rhetoric, some borders seem to be more impenetrable than others. Issues surrounding sexual orientation and identity may well be the "final frontier" for many educators, researchers and policy makers. Critical pedagogues, like other academics, have only recently announced this boundary was "safe" for exploration. This is

not surprising given educators' and Americans' historic reticence and occasional hostility towards anything (or anyone) perceived to be "queer" (Elam, Rose & Gallup, 1996; Harbeck, 1997, 1992; Sears, 1992; Anderson, 1994, Kissen, 1993). The larger political environment has also served to shore up the boundary. Conservative religious political groups have exploited educators' discomfort and the institutionalized homophobia of public education by claiming US public schools actively promote homosexuality (Lugg, 1996b). As one publication states:

> The promotion and advocacy of homosexuality in our public schools has increased significantly. Local school district parents and students are faced with new and dangerous homosexual advocacy tactics from their own educators. These promoters of homosexuality are determined to remove the values and beliefs of the community by portraying homosexuality, bisexuality, and transgendered lifestyles as normal.... (Traditional Values Report, 1997, n.p.).

Employing the methodology of history from below (Sharpe, 1991), this author examines institutional homophobia within US public schools, from the 1970s to the present, highlighting the shifting social and political attitudes towards same-gender relations. It concludes with a general discussion of institutional homophobia and the historic implications for educators and policymakers.

Methodological considerations

There are numerous methodological paradoxes facing researchers, particularly historians, who seek to transgress this seemingly final boundary. As a political distinction, homosexuality is a recent invention by the late 19th century German sexologists (Faderman, 1991; Miller, 1995; Harbeck, 1997). As such, it did not gain the particular attention of public educators until the turn of the century, when it began to be pathologized.

At that point, a thoroughly Freudian America took pains to ensure its children would reach their full emotional development (i.e. not become "gay"). This distinction was further elaborated upon through the mid-century, when McCarthyism was at its peak, and to be gay or lesbian meant one was sinful, pathological or criminal, or perhaps, all three at once (D'Emilio, 1983; Alwood, 1996; Miller, 1995; Harbeck, 1997, 1992; Faderman, 1991; Scagliotti & Schiller, 1986).

Such political distinctions (see Edelman, 1974) coupled with the heavy social coercion to at least appear straight or "pass" (D'Emilio, 1983; Faderman, 1991; Miller, 1995; Alwood, 1996), has lead to a paucity of historical sources regarding gays and lesbians in general, and gay and lesbian educators in particular. In the case of gay and lesbian public school teachers and administrators, the lack of historical data is not surprising, given the "morality" clause imposed by many states. With the exception of legal cases and the occasional sensationalistic newspaper account from the 1950s (Alwood, 1996; D'Emilio, 1983), it was not until the 1970s, that research emerged regarding gay and lesbian students. In the 1980s, a few studies "examined issues relating to homosexuality in the context of the public elementary or high school" (Sears, 1992, p. 39). But even in the late 1990s, for the most part, the historical record remains rather threadbare (See Appendix A).

The methodology of "history from below" seeks to reconstruct a past that historians have chosen to ignore. Traditional historiography tends to be written with a top-down viewpoint. Using the traditional lens, history is the factual stories of generals, politicians and assorted great "leaders." Yet, historical events are typically more complex and nuanced which a top-down approach can blur, or even fail to consider. Too many of the "lesser" participants are left out of the story. As historian Jim Sharpe observes, history from below "provides a means for restoring their history to social groups who may have thought that they had lost it, or who were unaware that their history existed" (Sharpe, 1991, p. 36).

History from below is also not particularly tortured over the question of historical "objectivity" (Novick, 1988).[1] It recognizes that participants had/have a point of view regarding the events, and may have had a highly personal stake in what may or may not happen (Sharpe, 1991). Additionally, much of the extent historical literature (written history and film documentaries) has been written/compiled by activists (some of whom are academics)[2] on all sides of the on-going civil rights struggle. Faced with such a paucity of data coupled with the ideological nature of what is extent, the author offers an initial historical exploration of public schools, the larger political environment and institutional homophobia.

Does Silence Equal Safety?

Since 1970s, the emerging gay and lesbian rights movement coupled with the rise of the new religious right (Harbeck, 1997; Diamond, 1995; Hardisty, 1995; Miller, 1995; Bennett, 1995; Blanchard, 1994; Gottfried & Fleming, 1988; Skaggs, 1996), have served to polarize the politics of public education (Lugg, 1996b). During the 1970s, many Americans were deeply uncomfortable with the notion of gays and lesbians "coming out," that is, publicly and proudly declaring their sexual orientation (Harbeck, 1997; Gross, 1993). For religious conservatives such announcements were indicative of just how far American society had fallen away from traditional morality (Murchison, 1994; Blanchard, 1994; Skaggs, 1996). Coupled with their religious belief that homosexuality was intrinsically sinful was the belief that gays and lesbians recruited children (Snowball, 1991;

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[1] For an extensive discussion on the notion of "Historical Objectivity," see Peter Novick's (1988), That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession. New York: Cambridge University Press. Novick notes that striving for "objectivity" can be akin to "Nailing jelly to the wall," p. 7.

[2] In particular, Martin Duberman, Lillian Faderman, John D'Emilio, and Toby Marotta.

Johnson, 1994; Skaggs, 1996).[3] For the Religious Right, the greater visibility and outspokenness of both gay activists and ordinary gay people was a political call to arms. As historian Joan Nestle observed:

> We were seen as a danger in terms of education, in terms of social policy. Though in a way, it was a recognition of our growing social power (Dong, 1995).

Yet for public educators, who had long been subject to immediate dismissal if their orientation become public knowledge (under the "community morals" rubric-see Harbeck, 1992, 1997; Sears, 1992; Gross, 1993), the environment was incredibly hostile. Homphobia was sanctioned under law and, in some areas, local police departments waged spectacular witch-hunts (Harbeck, 1997; D'Emilio, 1983).[4] Much of this hostility was a legacy of the anti-Communist witch-hunts of the 1950s.[5] According to historian John D'Emilio:

> According to the extreme anticommunist ideologues, left-wing teachers poisoned the minds of their students; lesbians and homosexuals corrupted their bodies. Communists bore no identifying physical characteristics. Able to disguise their true selves, they infiltrated the government where, as the Hiss and Rosenberg cases seemed to demonstrate, they committed

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[3] This has been a very effective scare tactic in raising money for the Religious Right. For example, televangelist Pat Robertson opined in a fundraising later dated May 24, 1994, "Such people are sinning against God and will lead to the ultimate destruction of the family and our nation. I am unalterably opposed to such things, and will do everything I can to restrict the freedom of these people to spread their contagious infection to the youth of our nation." Quoted in a May 23, 1996 press release by the People for the American Way (1996a).

[4] Gay witch-hunts were most prevalent in the 1950s (Harbeck, 1997; Alwood, 1996; Faderman, 1991; D'Emilio, 1983). Harbeck notes that "Quite probably, the occupational group most harmed was lesbian and gay educators. Not only did they face the legal and social consequences of their arrest, but in most states they also faced immediate job termination, regardless of the disposition of their criminal case (Harbeck, 1997, p. 187).

[5] A favorite insult of the era was to call an individual "Commie, Pinko, Fag" (D'Emilio, 1983; Harbeck, 1997).

> treason against their country. They exhibited loyalty to a political ideology and a power that inspired fanatical, unreasoning passion. Homosexuals too could escape detection (D'Emilio, 1983, pp. 48-49).

The popular myth of the time was that gay and lesbian adults recruited unsuspecting children "into the lifestyle" (Epstein & Schmiechen, 1984). While the charges of recruitment were demonstrably false, they held enormous sway in shaping public school policies and procedures. Teachers and administrators were subject to summery dismissal on mere hearsay (D'Emilio, 1983; Faderman, 1991) According to the historian Lillian Faderman, what happened to the following teacher was not atypical:

> Wilma, who was a high school physical education teacher in Downey, a Los Angeles suburb, in the early 1970s, says that after a couple of years at the school she decided she would tell her best friend on the faculty that she was a lesbian because "I thought we were really close. She was always telling me about her problems with her husband and her children, and I was tired of living a lie with her." The other women went to the principal the next day, saying in light of what she had learned she could no longer work with Wilma. He immediately called Wilma into his office and demanded that she write out a resignation on the spot. In return for her resignation he promised he would not get her credential revoked: "But he said he just wanted me out of the school. We had been good friends. He was priming me for a job as an administration" (Faderman, 1991, 156).

This particular teacher was able to find another position in public education. Yet, to insure that she would keep her job, she married a gay man, made sure he was present for all of the faculty parities, and insisted everyone address her as "Mrs." (Faderman, 1991).

Additionally, the new religious right focused upon the symbol (or symbolic enemy – see Edelman, 1988) of the "menacing gay educator" for its own political gain. In 1978, a

referendum was presented to the voters of California that would have specifically barred gays and lesbians from working in public schools (Marcus, 1992; Cannon, 1991; Vaid, 1995; Hardisty, 1995; Harbeck, 1997). Proposition 6 was sponsored by California state senator John Briggs, under the rationale gays and lesbians should not be exposed to children (Epstein & Schmiechen, 1984).[6] Briggs's principal field lieutenant was the Reverend Louis Sheldon, who would later form the "Traditional Values Coalition" in 1983 (Bennett, 1995; Hardisty, 1995).[7]

The actual effort to pass Proposition 6 was marked by a high level of political rancor. Proponents of the measure trumpeted the myth of the homosexual child molester to engender political support (Harbeck, 1997). As Prop 6 supporter, the Rev. Ray Batema, thundered at one rally, "Who wants the children? And I'll tell you who wants your children. The homosexual crowd wants them!" (Epstein & Schmiechen, 1984). According to activist and former teacher Phyllis Burke the entire issue was hyperventilated:

> Briggs attacked the gay community with amazing viciousness, declaring "This is not a civil rights issues" and warning his audience that only Proposition 6 could prevent "homosexuals having access to your children. That's the issue: Do you or do you not want to give homosexuals access to your children?" (Burke, 1993, p. 62).

Emotions ran high throughout the fall of 1978. While most teachers remained closeted throughout the campaign (Burke, 1993; Harbeck, 1997), one elementary teacher "came out" in a LA Times profile. Tom Ammiano later recalled

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[6] The logic was rather tortured. In a press conference, Senator Briggs equated gays and lesbians to prostitutes and then observed "But it's not illegal to be a homosexual in California!" (Epstein & Schmiechen, 1984).

[7] By the mid-1990s, Sheldon would play a significant role in the debates regarding public education and whether or not US public schools "promoted homosexuality." On December 6, 1995, Sheldon appeared before the House Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee, claiming school programs targeted at preventing AIDS, hate violence, and suicide, actually fostered homosexuality.

> This was such a personal issue for me. This is something I do everyday. And of course, the gay teacher issue, is very volatile (Epstein & Schmiechen, 1984).

Early polls showed that the Briggs amendment might pass. According to gay activist Bill Kraus, "Almost everyone thought we were going to lose and lose badly. I don't remember anyone being optimistic" (Epstein & Schmiechen, 1984). However, the proposal was dealt a political death-blow when conservative politician and probable Republican presidential candidate Ronald Reagan attacked the measure (Miller, 1995; Cannon, 1991). To the astonishment of his fellow conservatives, Reagan declared that the initiative had:

> the potential for real mischief....Innocent lives could be ruined....Whatever else it is, homosexuality is not a contagious disease like measles. Prevailing scientific opinion is that an individual's sexuality is determined at a very early age and that a child's teachers do not really influence this (as quoted in Harbeck, 1992, p. 129).

Given Reagan's impeccable conservative credentials (and he would later be obliquely endorsed by the virulently homophobic Rev. Jerry Falwell – "Vote for the Reagan of your choice" – see Chandler, 1984, p. 55), and mainstream union opposition (i.e. AFL-CIO), the measure was easily defeated, 59 percent to 41 percent of votes cast (Epstein & Schmiechen, 1984), even losing in overwhelmingly conservative Orange County (Burke, 1993).[8].

During the 1970s, gay and lesbian students also faced a hostile climate. The school site, whether at the elementary, middle or senior high level, was one of insults, innuendo, and on occasion, violence. Students were typically assaulted by their peers. As Kevin Jennings recalled:

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[8] There is a historical irony with the Briggs amendment in that Ronald Reagan attacked the measure with far more intensity than did then-President Jimmy Carter (Vaid, 1995).

> I was taunted daily in the hallways, in the locker room, in classes before the teacher called the roll, even during class. Whenever I volunteered to answer a question or write on the board, a slightly audible mummer from my classmates would arise. "Faggot," I would hear. I learned not to volunteer or raise my hand (Jennings, 1994, p. 20).

Despite the American Psychiatric Association's removal of homosexuality from the DSM in 1973, many educators and administrators viewed it as a form of mental illness and/or moral failure. Many were loathe to stop the harassment of students who were perceived to be gay or lesbian (Jennings, 1994). It was an environment that could and did lead some students to utter despair.

> In Lebanon, Pennsylvania, in 1977, a 16-year-old boy fatally shot himself before entering the 10th grade. He left a suicide note explaining he could not return to school and sustain the abuse and ridicule about being gay from his classmates. A few friends at school supported [him] though they knew he was gay, but the majority ridiculed him without mercy (as cited in Gibson, 1994, p. 45).

Subsequently, those students who could hide their orientation, did so. As Aaron Fricke recalled:

> The only goal left to me was to hide anything that could identify me as gay. ... I thought that anything I did might somehow reveal my homosexuality, and my moral sank even deeper. The more I tried to safeguard myself from the outside world, the more vulnerable I felt. I withdrew from everyone and slowly formed a shell around my self (as quoted in Gibson, 1994, p 31).

During the 1980s, the emerging AIDS epidemic heightened public awareness of at least gay men (Alwood, 1996; Gross, 1993). And there was a growing realization that the public schools would be enlisted into combating the epidemic. Public educators and policy

makers were placed in an uncomfortable position. Sexuality education had long been a favorite political target, particularly of the Religious Right (Cannon, 1991; Coontz, 1992; Galst, 1995 Skaggs, 1996; Gaddy, Tall, & Marzano, 1996; Harbeck, 1997). One prominent televangelist declared that sex education taught children "how to enjoy fornication without having to feel guilty" (Bennett, 1995, p. 377).[9] In general, sex education tended to be cursory in many public school districts, and mention of gay and lesbian issues was almost non-existent (Gibson, 1994). Coupled with the limited political support for sexuality education was educators own ill-ease with, and at times, overt hostility to, homosexuality (Harbeck, 1997; Gibson, 1994; Sears, 1992). It was the rare program that addressed the danger AIDS presented to all adolescents (Wright, 1989). As A. Damien Martin, co-founder of the Hetrick-Martin Institute for Gay and Lesbian Youth in New York City, recalled:

> we became the first organization in the city to start a systematic education on AIDS and HIV prevention for adolescents [in 1984]. Nobody would admit that adolescents were at risk or that gay adolescents were at risk. That lack of interest, by the way, was prevalent in the gay community as well. We went to some of the AIDS organizations, and they just didn't want to face it. Part of their reasoning, I'm sure, was that they felt they had enough trouble without having to take on kids (Marcus, 1992, p. 344).

However, two events reshaped the policy response to AIDS. The first was death of actor and old friend of Ronald Reagan, Rock Hudson, on October 2, 1985. Hudson had had a long career playing romantic leads in numerous movies and television shows. He repeatedly portrayed the seemingly all-American (and very straight) guy (Cannon, 1991). Prior to Hudon's death, AIDS had been a disease without a face, without much press converge, and without much public policy interest. This changed with Hudson's death

[9] The Reverend Jimmy Swaggart.

(Alwood, 1996; Miller, 1995; Cannon, 1991). According to media researcher Ron Milavsky:

> Rock Hudson's illness, death, and his admission that he was indeed dying of AIDS was a very unusual combination that was big news and stimulated the public's interest. From July to December 1985, NBC broadcast over 200 stories on AIDS – three times as during the entire 1980 to 1984 period (as quoted in Gross, 1993, p. 35).

The other event that galvanized the public policy response was the report issued by US Surgeon General, C. Everett Koop, on October 22, 1986. Koop, a "stern-visaged evangelical Christian," was a most unlikely author of the bluntly worded report on the AIDS epidemic (Cannon, 1991, p. 815). Not only did he give three specific public health responses to combating the epidemic, "One, abstinence; two, monogamy; three, condoms," he called for schools to address the danger of AIDS "at the lowest grade possible" (Cannon, 1991, p. 815).[10] The strongly worded Surgeon General's report, which was sent to every household in the US, legitimated action by public schools in the area of AIDS education (People for the American Way, 1996b). Although many educators were uneasy with orientation issues that were associated with AIDS (Wright, 1989), given its near 100 percent mortality rate, AIDS was eventually included in the category of rotten outcomes for students who were considered to be "at-risk."

The inclusion of AIDS into the "at-risk" formula was critical, for it encouraged researchers and educators to broadened their policy scope to examine issues facing gay and lesbian students (Crantson, 1992). In 1989, the US Department of Health and Human Services released limited copies of a massive study examining youth suicide (Remafedi, 1994). While the "Report of the Secretary's Task Force on Youth Suicide" had originally

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[10] Journalist Randy Shilts presents a slightly different version of Koop's comments regarding education. "AIDS education, Koop wrote, 'should start at the earliest grade possible' for children" (Shilts, 1987, p. 587).

been backed by the then-Bush administration, the final version faced numerous political obstacles to publication, for it included a highly controversial chapter that examined the rates of suicide of gay and lesbian youth (Remafedi, 1994). The findings were politically contentious for the federal report explicitly stated that gay and lesbian youth were "at-risk"

> Gay youth face extreme physical and verbal abuse, rejection, and isolation from family and peers. They often feel totally alone and socially withdrawn out of fear of adverse consequences. As a result of these pressures, lesbian and gay youth are more vulnerable than other youth to psychosocial problems including substance abuse, chronic depression, school failure, early relationship conflicts, being forced to leave their families, and having to survive on their own prematurely. Each of these problems presents a risk factor for suicidal feelings and behavior ...
>
> ... gay youth are 2 to 3 times more likely to attempt suicide than other young people. They may comprise up to 30 percent of completed suicides annually (Gibson, 1994, p. 15).

The "at-risk" designation was not, perhaps the most positive way to gain recognition of the dilemmas facing gay and lesbian students (i.e. gay = suicide, see Harbeck, 1997), but it was an effective wake-up call.

For gay and lesbian educators, the 1980s represented a mixed bag of greater public awareness coupled with a general conservative cultural backlash (Giroux, 1993). It was a time of carefully crafted obituaries of single young men who died of pneumonia and cancer, not AIDS (Alwood, 1996). There was greater visibility of gays and lesbians thanks (?) largely in part to the news media being embarrassed into covering AIDS (Gross, 1993; Alwood, 1996). However such visibility was taking place during a political era of "family values" (Diamond, 1995), with leaders of the religious right using homophobia and fear of AIDS to fill their coffers (Bennett, 1995; Galst, 1995; Hardisty, 1995; Diamond, 1989). For teachers and administrators, it was a time of social and professional paradoxes. One

could be quietly "out," but not particularly publicly "out." Teacher John Pikala's experience in an administrative team meeting reflected the contradiction. He told his colleagues:

> "It's an open secret among the adults in the strict who know me that I am a gay man. I want to be more open not only with the staff but with the students at Central." To a person, they discouraged me from coming out any further (Jennings, 1994, p. 91).

The political and social climate of the 1990s has intensified by paradoxes of the public school and institutional homophobia. There have been numerous examples of gay and lesbian students forming clubs[11] and or gay/straight student alliances. Yet many gay and lesbian educators remain deeply closeted (Harbeck, 1997). Concurrently, religious right groups have attacked these clubs, as well as curricular issues (Lugg, 1996b; Hardisty, 1995), both in the name of upholding traditional morality[12] and to advance their own political agenda (Hardisty, 1995; Galst, 1995). Only one state, Massachusetts, has implemented a program that specifically addresses the needs of gay and lesbian students, and that was in 1993 (Remafedi, 1994). While both the character and the individual "Ellen" may be "out," it still the rare student, teacher, or even rarer administrator, who trespasses beyond this institutional boundary. As Janet Pollack wrote in 1994, "the lesbian/gay teacher who reveals her/his minority identity in an elementary, middle, or high school classroom is likely to be on the road to the unemployment line" (1994, p. 131). The school climate remains hostile for gays and lesbians (Anderson, 1994; Elam, Rose & Gallup, 1996).

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[11] The most notable club is in Salt Lake City, UT, which has faced the wrath of the both the religious and political communities. Such upheaval is not without great personal costs. Jacob Orosco, this year's president of the club, committed suicide in September (Florio, 1997).

[12] Of course, "tradition" is a freighted word. Determining just exactly which traditions should be upheld (slavery? spousal abuse?) and which should be ignored (the Social Gospel?) is ultimately, a political determinations (Coontz, 1992).

Institutional and Historical Silences: Safety for Whom?

The problems of conducting historical research are manifest in such an undertaking as examining gay and lesbians, public schools, and institutional homophobia. Currently, there is a paucity of research on contemporary issues facing gays and lesbians within the public school setting. This is compounded by the scare historical data (see Appendix A). What is currently extent, appears to be fragmentary accounts imbedded within larger historical dissections.

The historical silence has been rationalized upon the grounds of "safety." And this is certainly a valid point. It hasn't been particularly safe to be openly gay or lesbian within the public school setting. Adults have been subjected to dismissal, liscensure revocation, and possible criminal sanctions (Faderman, 1991, Harbeck, 1997, 1992; Miller, 1995). Children have been at-risk for verbal and physical abuse within the school setting (Jennings, 1994; Gibson, 1994; Harbeck, 1992). Both have been at-risk for public vilification and psychiatric "treatment" (including electro-shock) in hopes of "curing" them of their respective orientations (Adair, 1977; Edelman, 1974).[13] Silence has kept, and does keep, some people safe. Additionally, while the charges of "recruitment" and "molestation" are demonstrably false, they have constrained the involvement of gay adults in the politics of public education (Marcus, 1992; Dale 1995).

This silence has also been capitalized by some political participants of the religious right. Since the 1970s, the religious right has cultivated the use of "strategic homophobia" (see Lugg, 1996a) or injecting homophobia into debates over public education policy to high-jack the educational agenda and reframe the terms of discourse following their own, largely paranoid (Hotstadter, 1963), rhetoric (Lugg, 1996b; Boyd, Lugg & Zahorchak,

[13] The author knows of one contemporary case of electro-shock administered to a minor. At present, gay and lesbian minors are at-risk of being forcibly "treated" for their homosexuality in psychiatric settings.

1996; Harbeck, 1997). The silenced, invisible, yet menacing "homosexual" is then reconstructed by the religious right into the symbolic enemy of children, their parents, and public schools. As the political scientist Murray Edelman explains:

> Enemies are characterized by an inherent trait or set of traits that marks them as evil, immoral, warped, or pathological and therefore a continuing threat regardless of what course of action they pursue, regardless of whether they win or lose in any particular encounter, and *even if they take no political action at all* (Edelman, 1988, p. 67, emphasis added).

But the silence involved has also contributed to the overall homophobic climate, both within the school and the larger society. As one straight student noted, "The only people who talk positively about lesbians and gays and lesbian[s] and gays. None of the other teachers talk about it" (Jennings, 1994, p. 154). As D'Emilio and other historians note, it was during the 1950s, when the legal and cultural sanctions were at their greatest within the US, that the silence surrounding homosexuality was the loudest (D'Emilio, 1983; Faderman, 1991; Miller, 1995; Scagliotti & Schiller, 1986; Marcus 1992). That such silence is still prevalent is curious. In an era of "diversity," where researchers and academicians claim to cross boarders,[14] it appears that gay and lesbian issues surrounding public schooling remain a significant boundary. Many educators and policymakers, regardless of their expressed ideology, remain unwilling even to publicly acknowledge this towering of boundaries. In a helping profession, the professional silences and occasional mutterings are telling.

[14] It could well be that the homophobia within academe is shaping what researchers will, and perhaps more importantly and will not examine (McNaron, 1997; davenport, 1994).

Appendix A

Dissertation Abstract Search (1861-1997)

	Total	Gay/Lesbian/Schools
Students/Pupils	94,373	16
Teachers/Educators	59,395	14
Administrators (principals/superintendents)	14,681	0
Homophobia	318	3

ERIC Search (1966-1997)

	Total	Gay/Lesbian/Schools
Students/Pupils	77,623	14
Teachers/Educators	178,487	16
Administrators (principals/superintendents)	10,088	0
homophobia	146	15

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